



WESTERN CAUCUS NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MARCH 3, 2004

CONTACT: Cody Stewart
(202) 226-5793

Congressional Western Caucus Expresses Outrage over Consumer Group's Illegal Use of Taxpayers' Funds

Washington, D.C. — A report released Monday by the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Inspector General found that an advocacy group illegally received millions of taxpayers' dollars and may have violated the Lobbying Disclosure Act by accepting grants from the EPA.

The OIG report concluded that many of the nearly \$5 million dollars in federal funds awarded by the EPA to the Consumer Federation of America (CFA) between 1996 and 2001 were ultimately used to lobby the very agency that awarded the grants. According to the audit report, the CFA reported to the U.S. Senate that it spent about \$940,000 between 1998 and 2002 actively lobbying the EPA to influence their policy decisions.

Congressman Chris Cannon (UT-3), Chairman of the Western Caucus, said, "The audit report reads like an illicit love affair between an advocacy group and the EPA. I'm appalled and embarrassed for EPA. This report highlights a lack of oversight, accountability, and internal controls. It shows a complete disregard for the American taxpayers by CFA and the prior Administration."

Congressman C.L. "Butch" Otter (ID-1), Vice Chairman of the Western Caucus and Member of the Energy and Commerce subcommittees on Energy and Air Quality and Environment and Hazardous Materials said, "If the EPA has had this kind of hand-in-glove relationship with one set of lobbyists, at taxpayer expense, imagine the synergy that's gone on between the environmental regulators and some of the more strident environmental groups. It's a scary thought, and the kind of scenario that the on-the-ground reality of EPA oversight in the West would sometimes suggest. I'm confident that Governor Leavitt has the determination and ability to set things right and create a new culture at the agency, and I look forward to working with him to that end."

"The OIG report highlights the fraudulency of the Environmental Protection Agency's non-partisan image," Congressman John Doolittle (CA-04) said. "Using hard-earned taxpayer money, the EPA has funneled millions of dollars to liberal advocacy organizations that turn around and lobby the EPA to pass extreme, left-leaning regulations. The American people deserve fair representation from their government and the EPA's self-promoting grant program is far from this."

Mr. Cannon further stated, "With more than half of EPA's \$8.36 billion budget going to grant programs, this report raises a lot of troubling questions. It is wrong for CFA and other groups to take taxpayer dollars and buy influence. The Congressional Western Caucus strongly urges EPA Administrator Leavitt to clean up the EPA's grants program and institute management controls and guidance immediately."

The entire OIG Report can be viewed at: <http://www.epa.gov/oigearth/reports/2004/20040301-2004-4-00014.pdf>

The Western Caucus is a group of 60 members of Congress committed to protecting the interests and ideals of the West. The mission of the Western Caucus is to focus on improving the quality of life in rural areas through policies that promote limited government, individual liberty, economic opportunity and personal responsibility.

###